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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VILNIUS 001455

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SUBJECT: LITHUANIAN PM PRESENTS CABINET LIST TO A SKEPTICAL PRESIDENT

Classified By: Pol/Econ Officer Christian Yarnell  
for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: President Valdas Adamkus on November 29 appointed Algirdas Brazauskas the new Prime Minister of Lithuania. Brazauskas, in turn, presented the President with his list of ministerial candidates, which includes Labor Party boss Viktor Uspaskich and Peasant Party leader Kazimiera Prunskiene. The list includes several controversial figures Adamkus opposes. The President has 15 days to approve the PM's Cabinet before it goes to the Parliament for confirmation. Although Adamkus could reject Brazauskas's list in whole or in part, we expect he will in the end approve the Cabinet list to avoid charges that he is destabilizing the government. The ruling coalition promises to be unstable enough regardless of what the President does. END SUMMARY.

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PM Brazauskas Presents Cabinet List  
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12. (U) President Valdas Adamkus signed a decree November 29 appointing Algirdas Brazauskas as the new Prime Minister of Lithuania. The decree also directed the PM to present, within 15 days, his list of Cabinet members to the President. Brazauskas, who had already reached agreement with his coalition partners on the composition of the Cabinet, immediately presented the following list to Adamkus:

- Gediminas Kirkilas (Social Democrat), Defense;
- Algirdas Butkevicius (Social Democrat), Finance;
- Zigmantas Balcytis (Social Democrat), Transportation;
- Arunas Kundrotas (Social Democrat), Environment;
- Gediminas Vaitkus (Social Democrat), Education;
- Antanas Valionis (New Union), Foreign Affairs;
- Vilija Blinkeviciute (New Union), Labor;
- Zilvinas Padaiga (Labor), Health;
- Vladimiras Prudnikovas (Labor), Culture;
- Viktoras Uspaskich (Labor), Economy;
- Gintautas Buzinskas (Labor), Justice;
- Viktoras Muntianas (Labor), Interior;
- Kazimiera Prunskiene (Peasant Party), Agriculture.

The Special Investigative Service (STT) has already conducted background investigations on all these candidates and issued a clean bill of health.

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List not to Prez or PM's Liking  
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13. (C) Adamkus had opposed Uspaskich, Muntianas, Buzinskas, Prudnikovas, Vaitkus, and Prunskiene during negotiations with Brazauskas. Presidency officials told us that Adamkus had recognized that he would not be able to block all of these controversial candidates, most notably party leaders Uspaskich and Prunskiene. He had, however, hoped to convince Brazauskas to remove at least two of the most objectionable nominees, Muntianas and Vaitkus. Many consider Muntianas, whose principal qualification seems to be his association with Uspaskich and Uspaskich's business, under-qualified for a ministerial position. Some, including at least one top Presidential advisor, also worry that Muntianas is "too close to the Russians." Meanwhile, media reports have linked Vaitkus to a forgery scandal involving the Latvian-based Baltic Russian Institute, and he earned a reputation as a poor manager during his tenure at the Ministry of Education.

14. (C) Brazauskas publicly supported Vaitkus's nomination. Of the other controversial candidates, he said that coalition partners had refused substitutions and that he would refuse accountability for the actions of his ministers. Nonetheless, Laurynas Bucalis, head of the PM's press service, told us that the PM would in the upcoming days make clear his responsibility for the work of the government as a whole.

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The President's Options  
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15. (C) Arnoldas Pranckevicius, advisor to the President for

domestic policy, told us that the Constitution is silent on what would happen if the President rejects the PM's list, and the Constitutional Court has never ruled on this issue. A "thumbs down" could trigger another round of parliamentary elections, although Pranckevicius argued that Adamkus could instead ask Parliament to vote down Brazauskas as PM and select a new candidate. Pranckevicius said that this would "not be a real option," however, given the strength of the Brazauskas-led coalition in Parliament.

16. (C) Another option for Adamkus, according to his advisor, would be to present an incomplete Cabinet for Parliamentary approval, excising one or two controversial candidates from the list. Adamkus could thereby try to force Brazauskas's hand to make some substitutions. Partial approval of the cabinet would also lead Lithuania into uncharted Constitutional territory, according to some analysts, although Brazauskas has already opined that the Constitution allows only for the approval of a complete Cabinet.

17. (U) Reluctant acceptance of the PM's list is the President's final option.

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Comment: Adamkus Likely to Yield  
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18. (C) Adamkus does not have firm ground to stand on in rejecting candidates on the list, and we suspect that in the end he will present Brazauskas' list in its current form to Parliament for confirmation. Adamkus did not support the formation of this coalition government, but he will not likely risk taking the blame for its premature demise. In the end, we believe that he will conclude that the coalition is unstable enough to collapse on its own, with no presidential fingerprints. The past week's tug-of-war within the nascent coalition over Lithuania's response to the post-election turmoil in Ukraine supports such a conclusion. FM Valionis and his New Union compatriots side with Adamkus in seeking a Lithuanian leadership role in brokering a negotiated solution, while Brazauskas and his fellow Social Democrats have espoused a more hands-off policy. This debate exposes the fault lines of what promises to be an inherently fragile government.

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